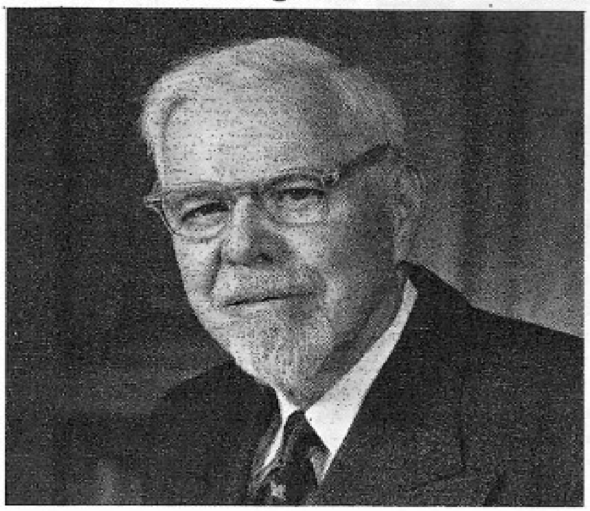
MMR_0006 1963 July Bill William Walthers gets FIRST EVER WRITE UP FOR MMR



Bill Walthers Awarded M.M.R.

At the Midwest Regional Meeting held in Racine, Wisconsin May 24-26, William K. Walthers was awarded the Master Model Railroader award by achievements award chairman Jack Kirby Taylor. Bill is now the proud possessor of MMR number 6.

Bill is one of the founders of NMRA and has over the years, although he can not be an official due to the business he is in, rendered invaluable service to the NMRA and Model Railroading as a whole. He has invented a great many of the devices that we use every day in our pursuit of this hobby and is instrumental in a great many more.

While the BULLETIN has poked a great deal of fun at Jack Kirby Taylor and the Achievement Award Program, it should be apparent to our readers that we are behind the program 100% and we now feel that the program is on the "High Iron" and one of the greatest programs that our members can share in and enjoy. The mere fact that the program is one that can be of benefit to all our membership, whether they participate in the actual program or not, earmarks this program as one that will be of assistance to the entire hobby (NMRA members or not).

In reply to the award, Bill Walther had this to say: "I want to thank you for encouraging me to apply for the Achievement Awards. My first reaction to this program was not too favorable, but after carefully reading the rules, its merits were apparent. Here certainly was a challenge to every model railroader to prove his capacities and abilities in his hobby.

"These awards can be likened to the degree system used by the Craft Guilds to advance the workman from apprenticeship to master craftsman. In those days they had no pins or certificates, but the apprentice, the fellow and the master could be recognized 'by the way they wore their apron'.

"Model railroaders who enter their models in contests and fail to win are often frustrated and discouraged by disappointment. While not all can win a coveted contest award, certainly every model railroader can work for and get a Merit Award. Once he has 'sunk his teeth' in this program, he will not be content until he is acclaimed a Master Model Railroader.

"When I received my Master Model Railroader certificate at the Racine Convention, I was as thrilled and honored as if I had won the Nobel Prize. As a manufacturer of model railroad merchandise, I am disqualified under the constitution to serve in any elective office and this, of course, prevents me from obtaining certain forms of recognition. However, I can assure you that the MMR award is a worthy substitute and one I will always deeply appreciate.

"I want to wish success in promoting this program. I hope every NMRA member will accept the challenge and win what ever recognition his abilities entitle him to."

Your BULLETIN can think of no better man qualified for this distinction and wishes to doff our lead lined hat to NMRA life member number one, William K. Walthers.

You might ask your local theater managers when these films will be booked in your areas, or to schedule them for a specific

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WILLIAM KEANEY WALTHERS

PIONEER MODEL RAILROADER

by Ed Ravenscroft

On May 1st, 1967, W. K. "Bill" Walthers died of a heart attack in Indio, California, on his way back from a PCR meeting in Flagstaff, Arizona. Just a few days short of being 74 years old, he had lived all his life in Milwaukee. In every true sense of the world, Bill was a pioneer among model railroaders. We have much to be grateful for what he accomplished in original and creative effort back in the late 1920's.

He was one of the first to propose and use D.C. polarity for reversing direction of travel. He designed, built and marketed the first switch machine. He developed, described, and sold the first truly simple system of detection for signalling — the series relay. He was one of the first to offer fibre tie strip for HO and O gauge, it is still available today under the trade name "Kwick-Lay."

Bill personally spent untold hours of personal time in research to compile one of the most extensive collections of protype information useful for modeling. In particular his collection of accurate data on lettering of rolling stock became the foundation for his extensive line of decals for all kinds of cars and locomotives.

In the early 30's Bill was engaged in the business of making and marketing the Findex system of card files. This business was hard hit by the depression, and so he turned to the manufacture and selling of supplies and literature for the model railroad hobby. His creative pioneering effort of the few years previous stood him in good stead. Some of the techniques and methods described in Bill's early technical pamphlets have been rediscovered and republished several times in the last 30 years.

When the NMRA was organized at a special meeting in Milwaukee on Labor Day in 1935, Bill was among those three score or so persons who attended. He encouraged and helped in the background in the early engineering work leading toward standardization of track and wheel dimensions. When the NMRA selected 1⅛ as the standard back-to-back dimension for "O" gauge wheels in February 1936, Bill was among the first of eight producers of such wheels. When the NMRA listed its first list of manufacturers who were conforming to Standards in August 1938, Bill Walthers was included in that list.

He was always a supporter and promoter of the NMRA and of the model railroad hobby in general. In recognition of his many contributions over a long period of years, he was awarded the DSA, "Distinguished Service Award," by the NMRA Board of Trustees in 1963. This award was very appropriately presented at the convention in Milwaukee that year. When the Achievement Award system was started by the NMRA, Bill Walthers became the 6th member to qualify for MMR, "Master Model Railroader."

As a person, Bill was a great guy to know and to be with. Many of us fortunately had this privilege as Bill and his lovely wife Annette attended nearly all of the national conventions and many regional meetings besides. Bill and Annette Peterson were married on June 16, 1917. They have two sons, Bill and Bruce; the latter now manages the business his father established.

As Bill found he needed to spend less time at his model railroad business, he and Annette planned, arranged, and conducted the first European model railroad tour. In succeeding years this successful event was repeated three times and the fifth tour was planned for early fall of this year, 1967. As a result, Bill and Annette have become personally known to leading model railroaders all over Europe and even other parts of the world.

Bill, we'll never forget your famous efforts to "scrape to the bottom of the barrel" during World War II to help find us those few items needed to keep our hobby alive. Bill Walthers, pioneer, friend, innovator, and all around good guy, we in the Model Railroad Hobby are sure going to miss you.